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Pride week about acceptance for all

By Kyle Webster
Staff Reporter

Despite the dreary weather that has plagued the University of Maine this week, students have been seeing rainbows all over campus.

Rainbows adorn the sides of buildings and are wrapped around trees along the mall, put up by a team of Wilde Stein members Sunday night in preparation for Pride Week.

Pride Week is one of the biggest events that the Gay Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning group sponsors.

"Pride Week is two things: It is a time for the members of the GLBTQ community to

show pride in themselves and their community. It is also a time for the rest of the community to see what we have to offer," Anastasia Harper, the treasurer of Wilde Stein, said.

Students, whether gay or straight, had varied views to exactly what Pride Week means.

"I see Pride Week as an opportunity to be who you are without being scared of what people will think, regardless of whether that is gay, straight or bisexual," said Rachel Coakley, a first year elementary education major.

"Pride Week recognizes the successes of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender folks, as well as challenges us

to continue making the world a safer and more affirming place for people of all sexual orientations," Matthew B. Small, a senior communication major, said. "UMaine isn't the easiest place to be out, so a celebration of one's identity is important to share with the campus community."

Others students weren't as supportive of the idea.

"I understand it's their right to make their own choices, but I do think it's rather one-sided," Christie Leathers, a junior biology major, said. "I don't understand why we can't have a straight week. Why can't we just celebrate both?"

A screening of the Rocky Horror Picture Show, a student

art presentation called "Diverse Creations II" and a talk given by former major league baseball umpire Dave Pallone started the week.

"So far we are very pleased with how things have gone," Harper said. "The events have had good attendance and have been well received."

More events are planned for the rest of the week. Highlights include a drag show and auction in Minsky at 8 p.m. Thursday night. Elvira Kurt, a comedian from Canada, will perform Friday night, and a dance with a "Heaven and Hell" theme will be held Saturday evening.

"We're looking forward to the rest of the week and expect high showings of people," Harper said. "These are all events that have proved popular in the past and we expect them to continue to be."

Pride Week will be celebrated nationally from June 24 to 30. Most major cities are planning large celebrations that include parades and other festivities. The UMaine community celebrates it in April for a number of reasons.

"Basically we want students to be here," Chernesky said. "The week isn't set in stone and we figured April is an ideal time for it here at UMaine."

The members of the different GLBTQ groups on campus urge everyone to come to any event, reminding people that this week is not merely for GLBTQ people.

"We really hope to have a large show of support from both sides, not just the GLBTQ community," Chernesky said. "This week isn't just about the gay community, it's also about our community as a whole."

Career Opportunity
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